

CHRIST THE REVELATOR

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KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING PROPHETIC TERMINOLOGY

The major events that will make tomorrow's news headlines are already prerecorded in your Bible. Yet so few seem to understand these vital prophetic passages. To millions, that third of the Bible that is prophecy is a sealed book. Yet, never has it been more necessary to understand prophecy. Here are some keys that will help you unlock prophetic meanings. See page 6.

WHAT IS THE "END OF THE WORLD"?

Does the biblical expression "the end of the world" mean the end of the existence of this physical planet? See page 9.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Answers to some often asked questions about Bible prophecy. See page 12.

CHRIST the REVELATOR

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The first verse of the book of Revelation states: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants *things which must shortly come to pass*. . . ."

Jesus Christ was a prophet; Jesus Christ was a newscaster of future world events; Jesus Christ forecast the overall, general sequence of events that would characterize the world from His time to now and on into the future; Jesus Christ was an up-to-date *futurist* in the true sense of the term.

He talked not only of the mind-bending, fast-moving, sometimes horrifying events to presage His second coming, but also of a *wonderful world to come*.

Blessings to come. Go to the Gospel accounts. In their contents, Jesus spoke directly of an altogether different kind of society that would envelop the earth in future ages.

The religious set of Jesus' day thought they had Him cornered with a trick question about marriage and the resurrection. But He deftly answered their questions by informing them of the never-before-heard-of conditions of tomorrow's world.

He forecast: "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain *that world* [Greek: *age*], and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: *neither can they die any more*. . . ." (Luke 20:35-36).

Have you ever before heard of a world in which part of the inhabitants—the *compassionate* ruling class as other scriptures make clear—can no longer die? Visionary futurists of our day contemplate a fantastic world with a vastly lengthened human life-span made possible by super-replacement parts for worn-out body organs. But how many envi-

sion the ultimate: ". . . neither can they die anymore"?

Matthew's Gospel account sheds still more light on conditions in this incredible civilization yet to come.

This particular scripture about tomorrow's world does have a definite negative connotation. However, it also has an unspoken positive side as we will show. Those that were hostile to (and attributed intentional indignity to) the Work that Jesus Christ was doing through the power of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming that future world would be on the outside looking in.

Notice Matthew's description: ". . . But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in *the world to come*" (Matt. 12:32).

But on the positive side, the benevolent rulers will be composed of those who execute justice and judgment in their personal lives. David said: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (II Sam. 23:3).

Some specific positions in this future world have been preassigned by Jesus.

To His apostles, Jesus promised: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30).

The epistles written by Peter and John are a microcosm of the overall good character of the apostles. Dedication, loyalty and love earmark those remarkable letters.

The Gospels are not the only biblical books whose contents reveal specific prognostications of Jesus Christ in His role as a prophet.

As was pointed out, the book of

Revelation is unveiled by Jesus Christ Himself. If you have a red-letter Bible—one in which the first-person quotations of Jesus are printed in red—you will be struck by the many prophecies spoken by your Savior.

Further revelation on the world to come unfolds as you progress into its exciting contents. Specific rewards are prophetically promised to specific churches (and the Church as a whole) in chapters two and three. "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations [in tomorrow's world]" (Rev. 2:26).

Rulership—the reward for overcoming sin and doing Christ's Work—is promised to every Christian executing justice and judgment in his personal life.

The Bible is chock-full of prophecies about this wonderful world to come. One scripture that perhaps best sums up the general conditions of the wonderful world tomorrow, and *on beyond*, was spoken by Jesus in Revelation 21:5. ". . . Behold, I make all things new." That statement is all encompassing. Our fragile, uncomprehending human minds could never fathom the depth and breadth of that prophetic promise.

In keeping with Jesus' *modus operandi* in His message to the seven churches, we have first presented Christ as the Revelator of these *good* things to come.

But he also is the Revelator of incredible prophecies of punishment to come on this world in the relatively near future.

Punishments to Come. Jesus was *both* specific and general in His futuristic forecasts of various types of punishment for the world's sins.

He directly foresaw the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The horrible picture was so vivid in His mind that He

100 YEARS FROM NOW

Where will you be?

Chances are that no one reading this is going to be a living, breathing human being 100 years from now. It's a bit unsettling, isn't it? Of course, we all know that human beings don't live forever. But thoughts of our own death, no matter how distant that event may seem, lead to thoughts about the "after life." Millions of people feel that for those who live a worthy life—for those who are "saved"—the afterlife is in heaven. Such beliefs are supposedly based on the Bible, but are, in fact, nonbiblical. The Bible does have a great deal to say about an afterlife, but it's surprisingly different from traditional beliefs. If you'd like to read more about the true biblical teaching on this subject, write for these free booklets: *What Is the Reward of the Saved?* and *Where Are Enoch and Elijah?* Send your request to

our office nearest to you.

Where are
ENOCH
and
ELIJAH?

What is
the Reward
of the Saved?



made great lamentation for what He knew would befall that city (Matt. 23:37).

And on His painful path to the cross, "... there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

"But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, *the days are coming*, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us" (Luke 23:27-31).

This stark prophecy *was fulfilled* (at least in part) in less than four decades. The historian Josephus recorded a vivid account of the terrible famine which ravaged Jerusalem: "It was now a miserable case, and a sight that would justly bring tears into our eyes, how men stood as to their food, while the more powerful had more than enough, and the weaker were lamenting [for want of it]. But the famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive to nothing so much as to modesty; for what was otherwise worthy of reverence, was in this case despised; insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants: and when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives..." (*Wars of the Jews*, book V, chapter X, section 3).

Josephus further described mass killings and deportation: "... So the [Roman] soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies" (*Wars of the Jews*, book V, chapter XI, section 1).

"And now, since his soldiers were already quite tired with killing men, and yet there appeared to be a vast multitude still remaining alive, Cae-

sar gave orders that they should kill none but those that were in arms, and oppose them, but should take the rest alive. But, together with those whom they had orders to slay, they slew the aged and the infirm. . . . Titus also sent a great number into the provinces, as a present to them, that they might be destroyed upon their theatres, by the sword and by the wild beasts; but those that were under seventeen years of age were sold for slaves. . . .

"Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege, eleven hundred thousand. . . ." (Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book VI, chapter IX, sections 2, 3).

The horrible happenings of A.D. 70 are an apparent type of the even more grueling events of the end time.

Perhaps the whole picture of these age-ending prophecies is best described and brought into proper focus in Matthew 24.

The disciples asked Jesus: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [Greek *aion*, meaning age]?" (Verse 3.)

Then Jesus proceeded to enumerate a series of general events and happenings that would characterize the times from the first century to now—actually intensifying to the extreme at the very end of the age.

Among the things Jesus specifically mentioned were religious apostasy, wars and rumors of wars, natural disasters here and there on the earth, and blatant religious bigotry finding its ultimate expression in countless brutal martyrdoms.

Signs of Christ's Coming. Finally, the world would be so dominated by sin that even some Christians would begin to lose their first love and actually begin to betray, persecute, and cause to be put to death their own brethren. On the world scene, Jesus warned of several prophetic benchmarks *to precede* His second coming—none of which has yet been fulfilled to the fullest extent.

1) *Publishing of the Gospel:* "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall

the end come" (Matt. 24:14). When you see the *true* gospel beginning to be announced to the world's nations—when you see this prophecy in action on the world scene—you should increase your personal world watch and vigilance.

2) *The Abomination of Desolation*: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place . . . then let them which be in Judaea [the modern nation of Israel] flee into the mountains. . . .

"For then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be [again]" (verses 15-16, 21).

Jesus spoke of the vital necessity of understanding this "abomination" in the parenthetical phrase, "whoso readeth, let him understand" (verse 15). It appears to involve a great religious leader who would make his world headquarters in the Holy Land. This event's great import lies in the fact that it is a sign signaling the beginning of *the great tribulation*.

3) *The Hour of Trial*: Jesus—the real Revelator of the Bible's last book—refers again to this utterly unique time in the world's history. Notice His message to the Church in Revelation 3:10: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the *hour of temptation* [trial], which shall come upon *all the world*, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

This hour of trial (an hour is a relatively short time in biblical prophecy) will not be a local upset done in a corner of Asia. It will be global in range—all the inhabitants of the earth will be affected.

4) *Jerusalem Surrounded With Armies*: The companion prophecy in Luke 21 gives us an additional prophetic waymark to consider. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (verse 20; cf. Zech. 14:1-4; Rev. 16:16).

But notice that this prophecy then parallels Matthew 24:16-20 as it describes the events just before the great tribulation: "Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not

them that are in the countries enter thereinto" (verse 21). Luke then describes *the great tribulation* in different words. "For these be *the days of vengeance*, that all things *which are written* [in the Old Testament prophecies] may be fulfilled" (verse 22). (Jesus often used the expression "it is written" when quoting or paraphrasing a passage from the Old Testament [Matt. 2:5; 4:4, 7, 10; 11:10; 21:13; Mark 7:6; 9:12, 13; 11:17, etc.] .)

The Bible simply does *not* clearly delineate all these eventful prophetic bench marks in easy one-two-three order. Nor are the ones mentioned the only ones; there are many more. The Bible is written "here a little and there a little," and therein lies one of the reasons Jesus continuously admonished His servants to watch (Matt. 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:33-37).

As world events unfold, Christians (and especially the ministry—see Amos 3:7) should begin to match up the world scenario with the biblical prophecies.

Jesus Christ—the Revelator of all prophecy and the living Word that inspired the whole Bible—enjoins the following very big responsibility on all Christians: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things [the end-time events mentioned in the preceding verses] that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

Believe it or not, God is very concerned that His elect (any person or persons who will truly obey Him and help perform His Work upon the earth) not suffer with a disobedient, God-rejecting world.

But the qualifications for physical escape are spiritual. Hoarding honey, soybeans and other food staples is not the right route to take.

"Seek ye the Lord, all ye *meeek* of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger," cried the prophet Zephaniah (2:3).

A sermon-on-the-mount-type character is required. If you develop such Christlike character, the chances of your escaping the great tribulation are very good.

God's anxiety for the physical welfare of His people is recorded by the prophet Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold [here is the reason for hiding], the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity . . ." (Isa. 26:20-21).

Notice that verse 21 ties right back into the Christian's prophetic responsibility: watching significant world events individually (and warning the world as a Church) as well as praying to be worthy to escape the punishments of God on this sick and dying world.

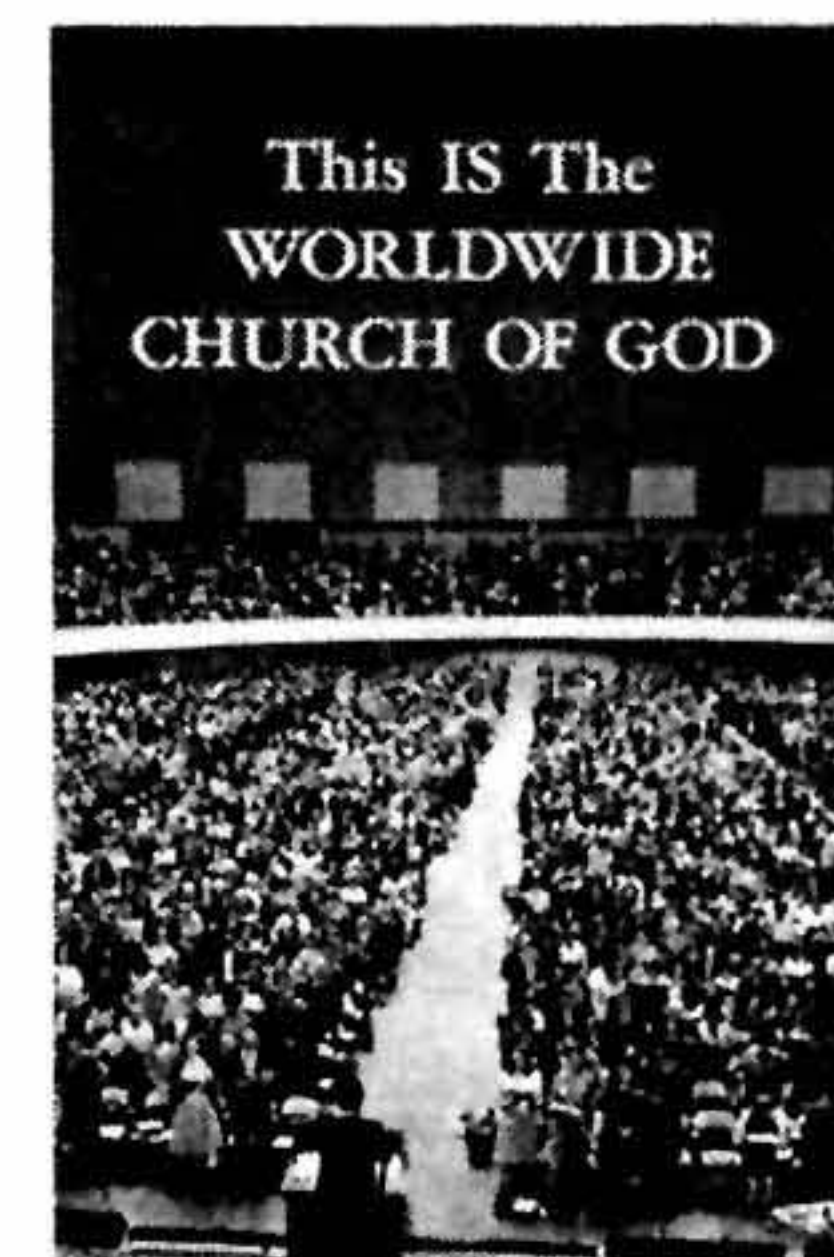
Watch! □

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Keys to Understanding Prophetic Terminology

The major events that will make tomorrow's news headlines are already pre-recorded in your Bible. Yet so few seem to understand these vital prophetic passages. To millions, that third of the Bible that is prophecy is a sealed book. Yet, never has it been more necessary to understand prophecy. Here are some keys that will help you unlock prophetic meanings.

TO MOST professing Christians the writings of men like Daniel, Zechariah, Joel and John (in Revelation) are shrouded in mysterious symbolism and meaningless metaphor.

So complete is this blindness that some "higher critics" have even dared to propose that such prophetic writings are merely the rantings of drug-driven hallucinators of antiquity!

Prophetic Blindness Prophesied. God *knew* it would be this way! Notice how vividly and accurately He describes this spiritual blindness in Isaiah 29:10-12 (R.S.V.): "For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, the prophets, and covered your heads, the seers. And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, Read this, he says, I cannot, for it is sealed. And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, Read this, he says, I cannot read.'"

That is, many of the learned theologians will claim that prophetic books are permanently "sealed" to understanding.

Others who are lay people will claim ignorance due to a lack of such "education."

God simply *has not given* the understanding of prophecy to everyone!

But Peter said, "WE have also a more sure *word of prophecy*; whereunto YE do well that YE take heed as

unto a light that shines in a dark place" (II Peter 1:19).

The Holy Spirit must *lead us* into all truth (John 16:13). This includes that portion of God's Word that is *prophecy*! (John 17:17.) Those who do not yield to God and submit to His *way* cannot hope to understand.

Daniel wrote a great deal about future events. Yet he did not really understand just how his own prophecies would work out! "I heard this, but *I did not understand it*. So I asked, 'O my lord, what is to be the last phase before the end?' But he said, 'Ask no more, Daniel, for the revelation is to be kept secret and close, TILL THE CRISIS AT THE CLOSE'" (Daniel 12:8-9, Moffatt).

He was speaking of the close of man's age—the time of the end! Then he said, "... the wise *SHALL UNDERSTAND*" (verse 10, KJV).

In the opening verse of the book of Revelation we find these words: "The *Revelation* [not concealing—but *revealing*] of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, TO SHEW [not 'hide from'] HIS SERVANTS [not the whole world] things which must shortly [with speed—i.e., Matt. 24:34] come to pass."

Prophetic meanings were not permanently sealed, rather they were to be *revealed*, but only to God's true servants—and that not until the end time!

You are living in that end time now!

About 90% of that prophetic third of the Bible is now well into the be-

ginning stages of fulfillment! You need to understand!

There are *keys* to assist in understanding. This article will explain some of the most important and basic ones.

Prophetic Time Lapses. One of the most crucial considerations when studying prophecy must be the time factor. This has been a major stumbling block to many students of prophecy. Even learned commentators have failed to grasp the principle of *prophetic time lapses*. This is especially true in *Isaiah, Daniel and Revelation*.

An excellent example of such a time lapse may be found in Isaiah 61:1-3. In the first three verses we find a short prophecy concerning Christ and His commission. (Actually the complete prophecy continues to the end of the chapter, but the first three verses will suffice to illustrate the point.) Jesus Himself quoted this section from Isaiah when He had occasion to read in the synagogue in Nazareth.

Notice it in Luke 4:16-20: "And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up: and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias [Greek for Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance

to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. AND HE CLOSED THE BOOK . . .”

Notice! Jesus *did not finish* quoting the rest of Isaiah 61:2! But why not?

Simply because the first part of that prophecy concerned Christ’s earthly ministry from 27-31 A.D. only! But the rest of the verse did not apply to the time of His first coming.

The remainder of the prophecy—starting in mid-verse—applies to Christ’s *second coming*—the time known as “the day of the Lord”—or as Isaiah expressed it “AND the DAY OF VENGEANCE of our God. . . .”

In other words, we see in *one verse* of Bible prophecy a prophetic *time lapse* of almost 2000 years between the fulfillment of the first and second parts of that one verse.

This principle is not uncommon in Isaiah’s writing and in other prophetic books of the Bible.

The longest single prophecy in the Bible (found in Daniel 11) covers a time period from the Medo-Persian Empire to the *return* of Christ in a mere 45 verses.

In Revelation 12 we find a brief biography of Satan the devil from his initial rebellion *many millennia* in the past to the years *and months* just *ahead* in human events! And all in 17 short verses!

Therefore, we see that it is very important when studying prophetic passages to get God’s guidance in understanding the *time element* involved.

Prophetic Symbolism. But understanding the time factor alone is not enough. We must add to this a knowledge of God’s use of *symbolism*. To grasp prophetic meanings God often uses symbols, analogies, metaphors and allegories in describing future events. It is critical to understand *when* such devices are being used and when a word is to be taken literally! Many have gone astray because they have failed to grasp the *symbolic* meaning of a word as opposed to a literal application.

Bible Self-interpreting. As a case in point, notice Revelation 1:20: “The mystery of the *seven stars* which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. THE SEVEN STARS ARE THE ANGELS OF

the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

Here we find stars being used as a symbol for *angels*. In fact, the name *Lucifer* (the great cherub who became known as “Satan” after his rebellion) means “Shining One” or “Morning Star” (Isaiah 14:12).

Thus we find a *principle* of prophetic understanding. When a word is obviously used as a symbol, we must look elsewhere in the Bible for the interpretation or meaning of that symbol.

The symbol for an angel is often a “star.”

Other Common Symbols. God uses many symbols when describing prophetic events. In Revelation 17 we find two mysterious symbols used in portraying events which are not too far in the future. In verse 1 we read, “. . . I will shew unto you the judgment of the great *whore* that sitteth upon *many waters*.”

Here we must know the meaning of “many waters” and just who this “whore” is if we are to understand the prophecy. Verse 18 of the same chapter gives us the answer in part. “And the woman [whore] which thou sawest IS THAT GREAT CITY, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” Therefore, we understand that the woman, or whore, as *GOD* calls her, represents a *city-centered* entity which has influence over kings—that, in fact, has ruled and will *rule* over other rulers!

Verse 15 tells us what the “waters” represent. “. . . The *waters* which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are PEOPLES, and multitudes, and NATIONS, and tongues.”

But to really understand the symbolism of the “woman” in this chapter, we need additional information. We find that throughout the Bible the woman often is used to signify a *CHURCH*. The congregation of Israel was called the “church in the wilderness” according to Acts 7:38. And in describing how God brought Israel out of Egypt and made them a great nation the Bible uses the analogy of a female baby growing up to womanhood in Ezekiel 16. Notice the phraseology.

“. . . Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem [representative of the whole nation of Israel] . . . thou didst

trust in thine own beauty, and played the *harlot* . . . and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them . . . thou hast taken thy sons and daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me. . . . How weak is thine heart . . . seeing that thou doest . . . the work of an imperious whorish WOMAN” (Ezek. 16:3, 15, 17, 20, 30). Therefore, we see the “church in the wilderness”—Israel—was represented by a *woman* who became an adulterous wife to God.

In the New Testament the true and false churches are also represented as women. In Ephesians 5:22-32 Paul draws a parallel between the husband-wife relationship and Christ’s relationship to the Church. Revelation 19 speaks of the “marriage of the Lamb” and the Church

EZEKIEL’S VISION OF THE “WHEELS”

The prophet Ezekiel reported seeing an awesome “wheel within a wheel” that has served as an oft quoted precedent for unusual sightings in the heavens, such as UFO’s.

“The appearance of the wheels and their work was . . . as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up” (Ezek. 1:16-19, see also Ezek. 10).

There is no need to make wild interpretations of these verses. Ezekiel 1:28 tells what it was that Ezekiel saw: “THIS WAS the appearance of the likeness of *the glory of the Lord*”!

What Ezekiel saw has often been described as a vision of a “portable throne” of God, complete with representatives of the angelic host. There is no biblical reason to believe otherwise.

is represented as the *bride* of Christ. The true Church is called "Jerusalem which is above . . . which is the *mother* of us all" in Galatians 4:26.

The principle is consistent. Bible symbolism often depicts a *church* as a *woman*.

Getting back to Revelation 17, we can see, then, that the great "whore" which rules over nations and kingdoms must be a false *church*! It is called a "mother" in verse 5 and a "woman" in verse 6.

When we understand the symbolism, then we can see that Revelation 17 is talking about a *religious* system, based in a great *city*, which exercises influence over human kingdoms and *nations* which speak various languages!

Verse 9 of the same chapter tells us the "woman" or church being referred to sits on seven hills or *mountains*. This may have a *literal* application and it may have a symbolic one.

The Symbolic "Mountain." This brings us to another symbol often used in Bible prophecy. That of the "mountain." This term is often used to represent a kingdom or government.

Jeremiah 51:24-25 provides a good illustration of this principle. Notice verse 24: "And I will render unto *Babylon* and to all the inhabitants of *Chaldea* all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord. Behold I am against thee, O DESTROYING MOUNTAIN, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth."

Here we find the term "mountain" used to describe the *Babylonian kingdom*.

Again in Daniel 2 we find the same symbol used. Notice verse 35, last part: ". . . And the stone that smote the image became a great *mountain*, and filled the whole earth."

Now, if we try to understand this literally, it makes little sense! Normally, a literal mountain comes to a peak of some kind. Can you picture such an entity "filling" a *round* earth? Obviously, the term "mountain" is used symbolically here. Daniel has just been recounting to Nebuchadnezzar the *dream* he has had. The entire dream was based on symbols. Go back and read verses 31-35 to get the whole picture.

Then God *explains* the terminology used in the preceding verses in verses 36-45. Note especially verse 44, which explains what the "mountain" that fills the whole earth is: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a *kingdom*, which shall never be destroyed: and the *kingdom* shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

Now the meaning comes clear! God was showing the world's kingdoms by means of the image. The various parts of the image represent various world-ruling kingdoms, namely the Babylonian (which Nebuchadnezzar ruled over), the Medo-Persian (which followed it), The Greek and finally the Roman. Then the "stone" which grew into a "mountain" destroys the last of these kingdoms, which is the final "resurrection," or revival, of the end-time Roman Empire. Christ will return and set up His *Kingdom*, which will be a WORLD-RULING Kingdom that will endure forever! That is what is pictured by the "mountain" that fills the whole earth.

Other Strange Symbols. In Revelation 9 we find still more mysterious symbolism. In verse 1 we again find the star symbol used for an angel. Here the "star" is personified and performs a certain duty for God. ". . . And I saw a *star* fall from heaven . . . and to *him* was given the key of the bottomless pit."

The term "bottomless pit" is not a clear translation. It should more correctly be rendered "the abyssal shaft," or "abyss," as other translators have done.

The next verses give a picture of billowing smoke emitting from the mouth of this abyss and darkening the sun. From the smoke emerge some very unusual *locusts*! Verses 3-10 give a full description of these bizarre creatures. They are described as having "tails like unto scorpions," a *sting* like a scorpion, being armored and having a roar like the sound of pounding battle horses! We are told that these nightmarish "locusts" are able to *fly*!

It should be apparent that John is not describing literal locusts! Whatever he is describing seems to be controlled by *men* (verse 7). It becomes

apparent that what John is seeing is *modern military weaponry* at its hideous worst! Today's frightening array of weaponry would give pause to the bravest man of *our* time, much more of John's time! And how else could the apostle describe it? There were not jet planes or rocket-launching helicopters in his days! The heart-stopping roar of hundreds of jet fighters and bombers was unknown at that time! To see men at the controls of such instruments of destruction would have been a shattering experience for any first-century fisherman! Who in John's time could have envisioned laser beams and flame-throwing tanks? Could any have foreseen the advent of giant missiles being emitted from the bowels of a nuclear-powered, undersea monster called a "submarine"? And what about the weapons John saw that *we* don't know of yet? Perhaps even more terrifying weapons are on the drawing boards!

Even if God had inspired John to write in modern military shoptalk, who would have understood any of it before the latter part of this modern age of space travel? John *had* to use the language of his day. Thus, the symbolism of great flying locusts.

In verse 11 we find the motivating force behind this great military power described. "And they had a king over them, which is the *angel* of the bottomless pit [abyss], whose name in Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his name Apollyon* [Destroyer!]."

This angel or demon is none other than Satan the devil—the Destroyer. He is the old serpent of Revelation 12:9, who is called the "god of this world" in II Corinthians 4:4.

He is the same one who gives his power to a great end-time false prophet (II Thes. 2:7-9). He will stir up certain kings or rulers to amalgamate their military forces to become the greatest war-making machine in history!

Bible prophecy is coming alive in today's news! The world's "hot spots" are spreading and this decade promises to be one of the most traumatic in man's experience! You need to *watch world events* as they unfold, daily fulfilling the many intricate and specific prophecies relating to this pulsating twentieth century! □

WHAT IS THE “END OF THE WORLD”?

MAKE NO mistake about it. **THIS IS THE END TIME!** But the world itself (the physical globe) is NOT going to end. Not soon—*not ever!* This planet has a *permanent* and vital place in the universe! Nor will mankind bring about his own extinction—almost, but *not quite!*

There will be a world tomorrow! And it will be a UTOPIA of peace and plenty. Such a world is *just around the corner*. You can bank on it!

But it will *not* be brought about by man's efforts! It will be introduced *in spite* of him!

Let's understand.

What, Then, Does “End of the World” Mean? The expression “end of the world” needs detailed defining.

Granted the Bible *does* use the term. Let's examine one such instance in Matthew 24:3: “. . . The disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us . . . what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the END OF THE WORLD?” Notice the phrase “the end of the world” is related to the *return of Jesus Christ to this earth*. Does this mean Christ will return only to *destroy* this earth and blast to oblivion the planet He Himself created? Not at all! The word “world” in this verse comes from a Greek word, *aion*, which does not signify the physical globe we call the “world.” It means “age” and has been so rendered by a number of translators.

The return of Jesus Christ signifies the conclusion of this age and the commencement of another—a millennial age—upon this earth. Beginning at His arrival, Christ will subdue all earthly kingdoms and assume the reigns of *world government* (Dan. 2:44; Rev. 11:15). This will signal the opening of a thousand-year period known prophetically as the *millennium*. It will be a

time of constantly increasing peace, prosperity and plenty. It will be a period of the rebuilding of this *ravaged earth*.

Great *ecological restorations* will be enacted and after a while even some old *cities* of this present age will be rebuilt (Acts 3:20-21; Isa. 61:4). Of course, this rebuilding will be done in an *orderly* and sensible manner. There will be no urban sprawl or slums in the cities of tomorrow. It will be God's world. And *God is not the author of confusion!* (I Cor. 14:33, 40.) Today's cities are disorganized, confused botches on the face of the scarred and polluted landscape. Tomorrow's cities will be orderly and free of pollution.

The End of This Age. Before Christ's millennial rule begins, however, man's allotted 6000-year age will come to a tumultuous climax! Many prophecies will be fulfilled in a relatively brief period of time. In the Bible this mind-shattering climactic period is known as—“*the time of the end.*”

The Apostle Paul in describing this period said, “In the last days the time will be *full of danger . . .*” (II Tim. 3:1, Phillips translation). Conditions on this earth will be so dangerous that ALL LIFE, human or otherwise, will be *threatened with EXTINCTION!* Only the intervention of the returning Christ will prevent *global catastrophe*. Notice, once again, how Jesus Himself described this now soon-coming period in Matthew 24:22, “And except those days should be shortened, there should *no flesh be saved [alive] . . .*”

Christ will have to step in and *save man from himself!*

Brink of Cosmocide In recent decades man's technological knowledge has rapidly increased at a staggering rate. But so have man's *trou-*

bles! Why? Because man does not have the *wisdom to rightly use* the technology at his disposal. For example, every new weapon that has been invented has eventually been *utilized*. Now man has the hydrogen bomb stockpiled in *overkill* proportions!

And yet newer and more bizarre weapons of mass destruction are on the drawing boards. The military potential of orbiting satellites is inconceivable. Laser beams and bacteriological agents are weapons too horrifying for the average person to consider.

But the solution to war and international struggles and conflicts is not a change of weaponry to more lethal and devastating munitions. Nor is it the ever-growing stockpiling of existing weapons of mass destruction. It is a *change of heart* on the part of mankind in general. **MAN MUST DEVELOP THE WISDOM TO AVOID WAR—NOT THE WEAPONRY TO WAGE IT!** As wise old King Solomon said centuries ago, “Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but [weapons in the hands of?] one sinner destroyeth much good” (Eccl. 9:18).

When Will Christ Return? This has been the question of the ages! Great theologians have pondered this question. Wild-eyed religionists have cried “wolf” too many times. The public is skeptical about the whole subject.

God, of course, prophetically anticipated this attitude. Notice the words of Peter, “. . . There shall come *in the last days scoffers . . .* saying, *Where is the promise of his coming?* for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (II Peter 3:3-4).

For centuries a wily and crafty adversary of God (Satan the devil) has sent his false prophets to delude

man into expecting the imminent return of the Messiah. Always there has been a letdown. Christ did not show up when these misguided self-appointed “prophets” said He would. Consequently, people have become doubtful that Christ really will ever return. This is exactly what the devil has desired! Because when God’s *true* servants stand up to announce the imminency of Christ’s return, a “once bitten, twice shy” public will not believe it! They’ve been “had” too many times!

But whom can you believe? Before you accept the words of any alleged servant of God, “. . . believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because MANY FALSE PROPHETS ARE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD” (I John 4:1).

God dogmatically states whenever He does a major act *He will inform His servants beforehand* (Amos 3:7). God’s Word, the Bible, *tells* how to recognize the conditions

that will precede Christ’s second coming. When the disciples asked what the sign of Christ’s coming would be, He gave them a *number* of such signs! They are listed in the 24th chapter of the book of Matthew. He listed an ever-skyrocketing curve of wars and rumors of wars, famines, disease epidemics, coexisting with a dramatic increase in religious fervor which would culminate in the arrival on the world scene of one great false religious leader of enormous influence and power. Read it for yourself in Matthew 24:3-15 and II Thessalonians 2:3-9. Accompanying this would be persistent rumors that Christ’s return has already taken place (II Thes. 2:1-2). Notice also Matthew 24:23-24. *Do not be deceived!*

God’s Word plainly says, “Watch therefore, FOR YE KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR WHEREIN THE SON OF MAN COMETH” (Matt. 25:13). *This Work has never set an*

exact date for the return of Christ! After all, who are we to dictate to Christ when He must arrive on this earth?

Though we cannot know at this time the precise day of the return of the Messiah, *we can know the approximate time in history*—“THE TIME OF THE END.” We can watch the news of the world fulfill the specific and meticulous end-time prophecies of God’s Word. When we see these prophecies being fulfilled (which they are!), we can also recognize that they are the signs of Christ’s arrival. As John the Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of Jesus, *this Work is preparing the way for His second arrival!* (Mal. 4:5-6.)

What Prophecy Means to You!

Jesus Christ commissioned His Church to preach and publish the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all the world as a WITNESS (Matt. 28:18-20; Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). The Gospel is prophetic! It has to do with present-day world news, and the FUTURE of this whole earth!

The *whole meaning* of the Gospel is PROPHETIC. Jesus Christ said: “*Watch* ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to *escape* all these things *that shall come to pass* [that are *prophecied*—that are to happen in the FUTURE], and to stand before the Son of man”! (Luke 21:36.)

And Bible prophecy is really coming alive! The world’s “hot spots” are spreading and the coming years promise to be some of the most traumatic in man’s experience! You need to watch world events as they unfold, daily fulfilling the many intricate and specific prophecies relating to this pulsating twentieth century!

Yes, you need to come to UNDERSTAND prophecy! Only by understanding the *prophecies* of the Bible can you intelligently WATCH—and Jesus meant watch *world news*. When you KNOW, *in advance*, what is GOING to happen—then you can be a real watchman of Almighty God!

Spiritual Qualifications Necessary Too. But, realize there is also a spiritual ingredient involved in intelligently watching world news and

II PETER 3:10—

WILL THE EARTH BE DESTROYED?

Many wonder about II Peter 3:10. Didn’t Peter say this globe would be destroyed? Was Peter really talking about the total destruction of the earth? Notice what the context tells us: “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (II Pet. 3:7).

This fire is the Judgment of ungodly men. This is the Lake of Gehenna Fire which is the second death (Rev. 20:14), the unquenchable fire that will burn up the unrepentant (Matt. 3:12).

Peter goes on to describe the effects of this unquenchable fire: “In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Pet. 3:10). An unquenchable fire is one that cannot be put out. It merely burns until it has consumed all combustible material. Then it dies out for lack of anything else to consume. Everything will be burned up except for spirit beings who are *not* affected by physical fires.

He used the example of Noah’s Flood as a type of the future cleansing of the earth by fire. “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (II Pet. 3:6). Just as the earth continued to exist after the Flood, so it will continue to exist after the coming worldwide Gehenna Fire.

Continuing with the context of II Peter 3 we find in verse 13 that: “We . . . look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” In Revelation the new heaven and new earth are mentioned immediately after the account of the Lake of Fire. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away [by fire]; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven . . . the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them [on the earth]” (Rev. 21:1-3).

The *earth will still exist* (Eccl. 1:4). The simple explanation of II Peter 3:10 is that the surface of the earth and everything on it, including the incorrigible wicked, will be destroyed by fire. God will then remake the surface of the earth for a habitation for Himself and the rest of the God Kingdom (Rev. 21, 22).

correctly understanding biblical prophecy.

Let's understand what it is.

God told Daniel the words which he had received were *closed* and *sealed*—but only UNTIL a certain time. Read it! “And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and *sealed* TILL the *time of the end*. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND” (Dan. 12:9-10).

Who are the “wise”? God says, “The *fear of the Eternal* is the BEGINNING of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). Wisdom comes from God! “For the Eternal giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6). The way to get wisdom—to come to *understand* the Bible prophecies—is to FEAR (be in awe of) Almighty God!

Today people say, “Well, I know the Bible says that—but here's the way I look at it!” People do not seem to really *fear* to misapply, to misinterpret, wrest, distort and twist the sacred word of God! People do not really RESPECT the divinely inspired words of Almighty God!

That's why many people don't understand the Bible! You can come to understand the Bible, and biblical prophecy, ONLY when you begin to really FEAR and RESPECT *what the Bible says!* (Isa. 66:1-2)

It is only when one has been truly converted, has come to fear God, to OBEY God, has REPENTED, and received God's Holy Spirit, that true *understanding* of the prophecies of God can come.

So, STUDY YOUR BIBLE—PRAY for God to give you an obedient, humble, submissive mind—giving you more and more a deep, respectful AWE of the Word of God! You can't afford NOT to—your very *life*—your FUTURE is at stake!

This is the End Time! Yes.

But no “Doomsday”—and no end of the world either. It will NEVER occur. This world (physical globe) and the race of man that inhabits it both have a brilliant, glowing future! But *only* because a loving and compassionate Creator is waiting in the wings to *save* man. Soon! □

“THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS...”

MEN HAVE been speculating on the return of Jesus Christ for *millennia*. There were those in the latter part of Paul's day who thought the return of Christ was imminent. The apostle to the Gentiles had to warn the Church in his day not to be deceived by unfounded and unreliable information concerning the return of the Messiah. “And now, brothers, about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and his gathering of us to himself: I beg you, do not suddenly lose your heads or alarm yourselves, whether at some oracular utterance, or pronouncement, or some letter purporting to come from us, alleging that the Day of the Lord is already here. Let no one deceive you in any way whatever” (II Thes. 2:1-3, *The New English Bible*).

Christ WILL Return. But there is no doubt that the Messiah *will* return to this earth to set up the everlasting Kingdom of God! The Bible is filled with prophecies describing the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Why?

Because the heart and core of the New Testament message concerns HIS RETURN to this earth to set up a ruling, governing kingdom.

The very first message that ever came back from heaven — after Christ began to ascend to God's heaven—was that He was going to return to this earth.

In Acts 1:11, Christ's disciples were told: “Men of Galilee, why stand there looking up into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken away from you up to heaven, will come in the same way you have seen him go” (*The New English Bible*).

This scripture alone is conclusive proof of Christ's second coming to this earth. But, read just one more, this time in the King James version. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear *the second time* without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28).

So the question is not *whether* He will return, but *WHEN!*

Human speculation on this has come to nothing. The truth must be revealed. Those sections of God's Word, the Bible, which reveal future events are known as *prophecies*. Only those who have been given special wisdom and insight by God are able to comprehend the meaning of prophecies and rightly use them. “. . . None of the wicked [those not living in God's right way of life] shall understand; *but the wise shall understand*” (Dan. 12:10).

Peter, referring to the Church, said, “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed . . .*” (II Peter 1:19).

It is through this “sure word of prophecy” that we can understand the truth about the return of Jesus Christ. And the Bible reveals that Jesus Christ is likely to return to set up His world-ruling kingdom in *your lifetime and mine*. (That is, barring any unforeseen termination of your life or mine.) *Christ's return will likely occur in this very generation.*

It is entirely possible that YOU, as an individual, will live to witness this great event! Jesus Christ personally stated, “Verily I say unto you, THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matt. 24:34).

Moffatt has it: “I tell you truly, the present generation will not pass away, till all this happens.” Phillips translates: “Believe me, this generation will not disappear till all this has taken place.”

Which Generation? But how can we know Jesus is talking about OUR GENERATION TODAY? How can we be sure He wasn't talking about the generation of *His* day? Let's get our bearings.

Matthew 24 records what is commonly called the “Olivet Prophecy.” It is so named because it was on the Mount of Olives that the disciples of Christ came to Him and asked about the prophecies concerning His *second coming* and of the *end of the world* [age—verse 3].

The whole prophecy is about the time of the end.

In answering the question about the end of the world, Jesus foretold a series of events that would *intensify just before His return*. He told about false prophets in this end time (verse 5). He talked about war and rumors of war, about world war (verse 6). He foretold famines, pestilences and earthquakes in different places (verse 7). (Most have been occurring for 2,000 years, but the intensity will increase.)

Then Christ explained that this Gospel of the Kingdom would be “preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the END come” (verse 14). He foretold great tribulation and heavenly signs just before His return.

Then to make it abundantly clear what He was talking about, Jesus gave a parable of the fig tree. He said, “. . . When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see *all these things*, know that *it is near*, even at the doors” (verses 32-33).

Christ showed that when these great earth-shaking events began to happen the time of the end of the age was at hand. *Today, these events are beginning to really intensify and come to a head.*

We’re in the time when God must intervene, or there will be no flesh saved alive. Jesus was talking about our day today. He said true Christians would know when He is about to intervene in world affairs *by world conditions.*

And He said, “So likewise ye, when ye see *these things* come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, *This generation* [during which you see “these things” occur] shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled” (Luke 21:31-32).

Other translators confirm this King James rendering. See Phillips, Moffatt, and *The New English Bible*.

We have the SURE word of prophecy and it says all these things must come to pass first, and they haven’t all come to pass yet. On the other hand, that same “sure word of prophecy” says the generation which sees “*all these things*” occur will not pass until Christ returns. □

Questions & Answers

Q “I have been reading your booklet called ‘The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last,’ and I’m still left confused as to where we stand in Bible prophecy. What comes first? The disease epidemics, or the famines, or World War III? Maybe I just don’t get the full picture. What is next in line for the earth? Can you tell me?”

A It is difficult to pin down *exactly* where, at any given moment, we stand in the development of Bible prophecy. While there are many very specific prophecies of particular events in the Bible, we must also realize that prophecy *generalizes* about many end-time conditions. The events of the Olivet prophecy (Matt. 24, Luke 21, Mark 13) and the correlating events of Revelation show a general picture of what will happen prior to the return of Jesus Christ: False prophets, wars, disease epidemics, famines and other prophesied events actually began in the first century of the Christian era. There appears to be a certain duality or duplication of events involved. All of the above-mentioned factors were present to one degree or another prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, the prospect of the total annihilation of human life was not possible then—in fact, it was not possible until recently, with the ushering in of the atomic age. It is to this end-time age that Jesus was referring when He said: “And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved” (Matt. 24:22, Revised Standard Version).

The Bible reveals the same type of events (wars, pestilence, etc.) will be repeated, with greater intensity, just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Even now we see such events occur-

ring throughout the world. Such happenings will steadily build in intensity and culminate in one last final war, false prophet, famine and earthquake just before Christ sets foot on the Mount of Olives to take over the kingdoms of this world.

Events are not always foretold in a one-two-three order. There is a certain amount of overlap. It is a mistake to attempt to be too specific in foretelling the fulfillment of certain prophetic events. The main lesson in prophecy is that Christians should *be prepared* at all times by maintaining a close relationship with God so that when these events begin to happen their salvation will be assured in Christ. (For more on this subject, write for the free booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last!* and *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.)

Q “There are two accounts of the second coming in the New Testament. The first account says Jesus will come ‘as a thief in the night,’ and in the second account He will ‘come in the clouds of glory, and every eye shall see him.’ Now, which one (if any) can we believe?”

A Revelation 1:7 (“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him”) refers to the *manner* of Christ’s coming. The statement that “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (I Thess. 5:2; II Pet. 3:10) refers to the *time* of his coming. He will arrive like a thief—at a time no one expects. The context of I Thessalonians 5:2 shows this: “But as to the *times* and the *seasons*, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of

the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

There is no contradiction between these two concepts: Christ will arrive in a dramatic, obvious *manner* (Matt. 24:29-31), but the *time* of this coming is known only to God the Father (Matt. 24:36) and it will take many by surprise just like a thief in the night.

Q "A while ago you people ran an article intimating that prophecy is conditional in certain instances. Could you please elaborate?"

A Yes, certain parts of the prophetic writings are conditional, although some prophecies such as those predicting Christ's second coming and the utopian millennial reign are unconditional.

God gives man a choice; if we repent He will have mercy on us. Leviticus 26 illustrates this principle. It enumerates the blessings and curses prophesied to come upon ancient Israel according to whether or not they kept the covenant God made with them.

The same concept is found in Deuteronomy 29 and 30: "When all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God . . . and obey his voice in all that I command you this day, with all your heart and with all your soul; then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes, . . . for the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, *if you obey* the voice of the Lord your God . . . with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 30:1-10).

The entire book of Jonah is an account of how God sent one of His prophets to the ancient city of Nineveh to warn them of their impending doom if they did not mend their ways. They repented and "proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). And "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it" (verse 10).

Another example of the outcome of prophecy being delayed by repentance is found in II Chronicles 32.

God had miraculously healed Hezekiah of a fatal disease, "But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem" (verse 25). God told him, "Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house . . . shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left . . ." (II Kings 20:17). "But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah" (II Chron. 32:26). Again, when a nation or individual repents, God has mercy on them.

Q "In some of your booklets that deal with prophecy of the future, you seem to indicate a belief that the end of the age and Christ's return may occur within five to ten years from now. Many sources claim Adam was created in 4004 B.C. Since God marked out a 6000-year period before Christ's millennial rule, would this not put Christ's return date some time in the year 1996?"

A There is a great deal of disagreement among scholars and experts as to the exact dates for key past events such as the creation and Noah's flood. And there has been much speculation about the precise time of Jesus' return to this earth.

World conditions show that we are living near the close of an age. Many of man's global problems have reached the point of no return. Environmental destruction, the capacity for total war, rapid and continuing economic breakdown, and the moral and social problems of modern society amount to strong evidence that Christ must soon intervene to save man from himself (Matt. 24:22, Moffatt).

But we cannot know just when Christ will return. No man knows the day or the hour of that momentous event (Matt. 24:36). We cannot set dates.

Q "One of your articles mentions God's '7,000-year plan for earth.' Would you please explain what is meant by this?"

A Up until now God has allowed approximately 6,000 years for humanity to write the painful lesson of "doing its own thing"—going its own

way without the revealed knowledge of its Creator.

A study of biblical chronology indicates that Adam and Eve (our first parents) were created about 4,000 years before Christ (Gen. 5, 10; I Chron. 1-9; Matt. 1; Luke 3). And almost another 2,000 years have elapsed since the time of Christ's birth—totaling nearly 6,000 years of human civilization to date.

And the Bible tells us that shortly after the appearance of Christ on this earth again, a peaceful, utopian, 1,000-year reign begins on this planet (Rev. 20:1-10; Isa. 11).

These two general spans of time (approximately 6,000 years of man's rule; approximately 1,000 years of God's rule) add up to a period of about 7,000 years.

Further, the 7,000-year concept comes from an *analogy* between the perfect weekly cycle (seven days) and the 6,000 year period allotted to mankind prior to the millennium.

We must realize that even though the saints will live and reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4), there is still an undetermined period of time allowed *after* the millennium during which Satan will be loosed and the Great White Throne judgment will take place (Rev. 20:11-12). This span of time is *in addition* to the 1,000-year period.

The main biblical indication of a 7000-year plan is the evidence provided by the millennium as a type of God's rest or Sabbath (compare Revelation 20 and Hebrews 4). If the millennium represents a "Sabbath," then it would be logically preceded by six similar 1,000-year "days."

II Peter 3:8 provides a basis for setting the length of each millennial day: ". . . One day is with the Lord as [Greek: *hos*] a thousand years, and a thousand years as [*hos*] one day." But we need to realize that even if we understand this as a literal statement regarding a 7,000-year plan, it is not giving us a precise, measured duration.

Why not? Because *hos* before numerals denotes "nearly," "about," "approximately." Compare its usage in Mark 5:13, "*about* two thousand"; Mark 8:9, "*about* four thousand"; John 6:19, "*about* five and twenty or thirty"; John 21:8, "*as it were* two hundred cubits"; Acts 13:18,20,

“*about* the time of forty years . . . *about* the space of four hundred and fifty years.”

The biblical meaning behind man's 6,000-year period of human history, marked by costly trial and error plus ignorance and rejection of God's revealed Word, is explained in our booklet titled *Why Were You Born?*

Q “Everyone at one time or another has heard that God gives warning before He sends punishment—that those who heed the warning will be spared the cataclysm. On the other hand, nearly all the apostles died by violent means. How are the violent deaths of so many repentant explained in light of this?”

A The scripture you are probably basing your first statement on is Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.”

Bible prophecies are sometimes general overall warnings to a nation as a whole.

God also gives a general overall warning to Christians. He states through the apostle Paul that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (II Tim. 3:12). The apostles themselves were practically promised martyrdom from the outset (see John 21:18-19; 16:1-2; 15:18-21). So in this sense they were warned, but were not delivered from violence at the hand of unbelievers.

Personal Counsel

If you have any questions about how to become a Christian, or you just want to learn more about this way of life, here is *good news*.

The Worldwide Church of God now has ministers available in many parts of the world. They are ready to counsel with you personally, answer your questions or to help you with any spiritual problems. We won't send anyone to see you *unless* you request it.

But if you would like one of these trained men to call and counsel with you about problems or answer your questions, please feel free to let us know. We who are in this great Work want only to help — to serve. We count it a privilege to do so.

It is important to realize that there is a difference between suffering for righteousness' sake (I Pet. 1:6-7; 3:14; 4:12-16) and suffering for one's personal or national sins. God in His wisdom did allow the apostles to go through various trials and even martyrdom for the gospel's sake. This was in spite of the fact that they were repentant, righteous servants of His. In contrast, the entire wicked city of Nineveh received a reprieve from destruction when God saw how enthusiastically they repented. Although these people were probably not leading deeply spiritual lives even after their repentance, God gave them mercy.

Reviewing the lives of all of God's servants as recorded in the Bible, it is obvious that one's spiritual state does not necessarily completely determine the physical course of one's life. One of the writers of the Psalms observed that wicked men are often blessed while righteous men suffer. But he realized that in the end God will see to it that all these seeming injustices are equalized (Psalm 73).

Q “Some scriptures indicate that at the time of the end true Christians will be persecuted and even put to death (Rev. 13:7; Matt 24:9). On the other hand, there are verses (notably Psalms 91:7-11 and Revelation 3:10) which promise that there is a way for true Christians to escape the trials and tribulations of that day. How can these apparently contradictory scriptures be reconciled?”

A Psalms 91:7-13 reads: “A thousand may fall at your side; but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your habitation, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.” This psalm cannot be taken as a definite promise of God to *always* protect every individual Christian from *every* physical trial. Rather, these verses proclaim the fact that sooner or later — in God's time — the right-

eous are victorious. *All things* work out for *good* to those who obey God (Rom. 8:28).

As Hebrews, chapter 11, vividly describes, many righteous people have been martyred in the past (Heb. 11:35-38). And many of the righteous will be killed in the future (Rev. 6:9-11). Tradition indicates that all of the original apostles (with the possible exception of John) died violently at the hand of persecutors. Even Christ Himself was crucified.

Revelation 3:10, part of the message to the church at Philadelphia, states: “Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth.” While it is obvious that this verse cannot be applied universally to every single Christian, it does appear to have a definite application to “the crisis at the close.” Even then, however, no individual Christian has a “carte blanche” promise for personal, physical safety.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 states that “time and chance” happen to us all. If we are caught in the middle of an accident, a war, or a national disaster, perhaps God will have mercy on us and deliver us from our troubles. But again, He may choose, in His perfect wisdom, to let us live through such trials or allow us to die as a result of them.

But does this imply that God is in some way remiss to allow such things to occur? Isaiah 57:1-2 reads: “The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart, devout men are taken away, while no one understands. [But] the righteous man is taken away from calamity, he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in uprightness.” So even death can be a haven from this world's troubles.

But where does this leave the average Christian hoping for some form of security to hang on to in this unstable time? Notice Paul's personal example. He experienced a great number of devastating personal trials (see II Cor. 11:23-28), but he never lost faith. He had his mind set on the promise of salvation recorded in Scripture—the *promise of the resurrection*. He was able to say: “I count

everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him . . . that I may know him and the

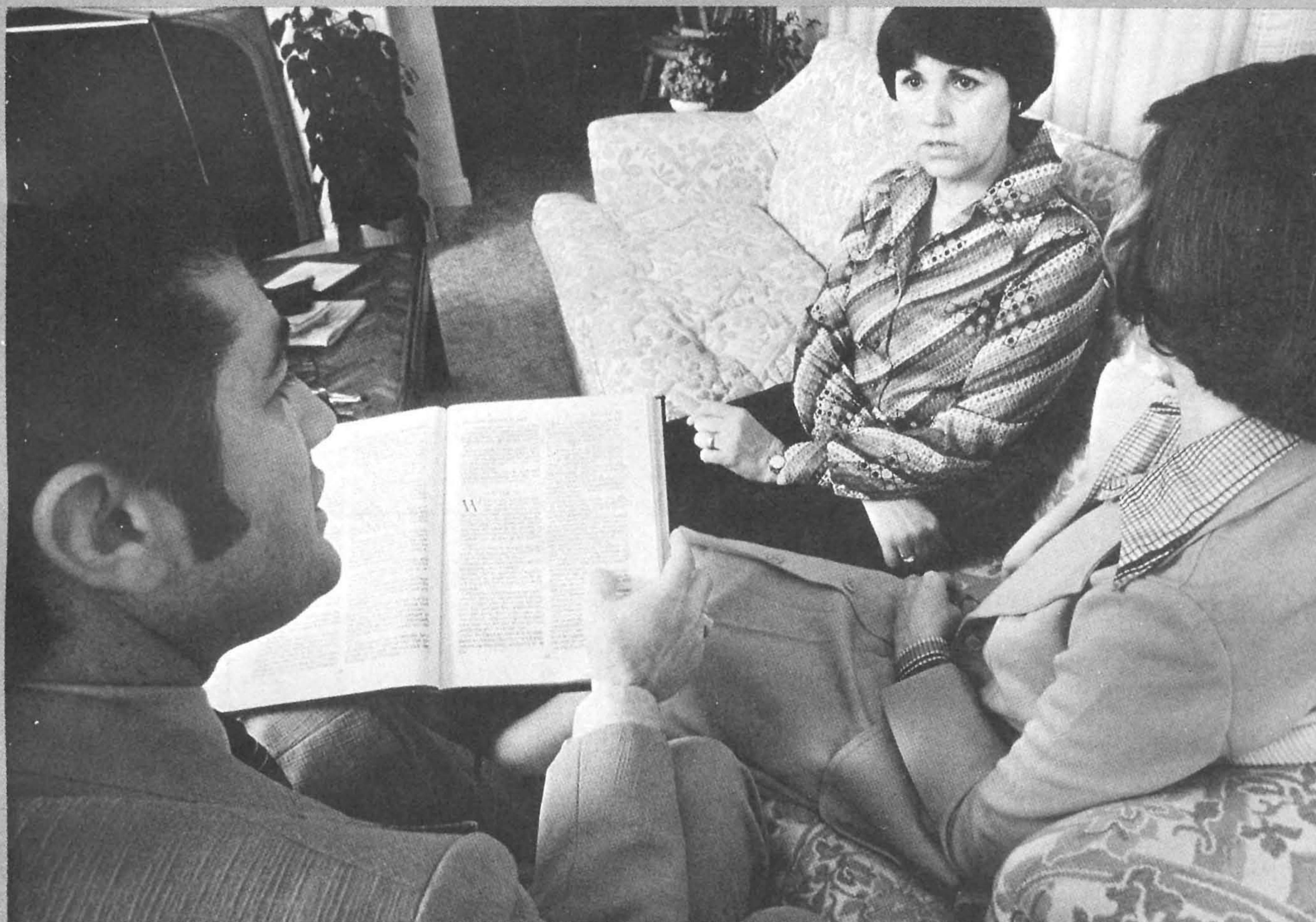
power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:8-11).

Paul valued being a Christian, and being able to preach the message

Christ had given him, *over* and above his own life. He knew that whatever happened to him physically, he would eventually be resurrected to immortal life. This kind of salvation is what Christians today ought to be pinning their hopes on. □

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This Reprint Series has been reprinted from publications of the Worldwide Church of God.

Printed in U.S.A.

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